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ABSTRACT

This edition of the "Bulletin of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English" consists primarily of articles on composition, with special attention to the composing process. John F. Butler, in "On Teaching Composition," discusses strategies for meeting two goals in college composition: teaching the more artful use of language and teaching the act of composing. John H. Bushman, Sandra Jones, and Sandra Zerger, in "The Thematic Unit and the Composing Process," describe how thematic units, sometimes in the form of mini-courses, can be used to stimulate theme topics. The emphasis, the writers argue, should be on the process of learning, rather than on the "product"; the approach is a balance between traditional and contemporary subject matter, with a student-centered curriculum. Nancy Vogel, in "'Exitus,' the Videotape That Went to Boston: 'A Momentary Stay against Confusion,'" reports on how the class construction of a videotape served to teach the fundamental composition processes. (DI)

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This is the annual composition issue of Kansas English. This year we focus on the composing process; the articles and book review which follow feature various aspects of it. The only departure from this subject is our standard feature, a report from state consultant Lois Caffyn on matters of professional importance to English teachers in Kansas.

On Teaching Composition

JOHN F. BUTLER
George Peabody College For Teachers

I

When you and I ask ourselves, "How should I teach composition?", we ordinarily are not asking "How can I teach someone to write better?" We are not, ordinarily—a qualification I won't bother to repeat—thinking of ourselves as people who want to help someone else learn to improve his writing. We are thinking of ourselves as people caught in the middle of a network of relationships, often a crushing network. Instead of thinking of ourselves only as wanting to teach another intelligence how to do something better, we think of the complexities of our teaching situation: X number of students per class, Y number of sections of composition, Z number of sections of other subjects. We think of ourselves in front of a group, with texts and a syllabus, and each of our decisions is made in the context of assumptions about our reality—there must be paper-correcting time, preparation time, and time for dozens of other obligations. From the middle of the network, it is hard to understand that as far as each student is concerned, we are trying to teach *him* to improve his writing. We see ourselves as working with large groups, as attacking a huge pile of papers while other huge piles sit nearby, as handing out our judgments: Sp, //im, mispl mod, 26d, frag. It seems almost necessary to conceptualize our situation in such a way that the best practices are impossible from the word go. After all, who can teach twenty-five and thirty students in one room so complex a thing as good writing? Who can teach several such groups at the same time, while trying to do a hundred other jobs which must be done? In impossible situations, we reach for irrelevant solutions. We forget our aims, we grope for ways to have a Good Class, we bring in Something Really Interesting, we fall back on literature, we turn to a book of essays, we give in to the Reality of Teaching Composition. We do things that, because others have done them, seem to be acceptable in a composition classroom, though they often have little or nothing to do with the teaching of writing.

John F. Butler is Professor of English and Director of Freshman English at George Peabody College For Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee. A consultant to numerous educational foundations and corporations and a frequent speaker at MLA, CCCC, NCTE, and CEA meetings, he is best remembered by readers of *Kansas English* for the distinctive and excellent writing program which he developed while Director of Freshman-Sophomore English at Wichita State University, 1966–1970.

Suppose we conceptualized our task in a different way. Suppose we tried to think out what we would do if *one person* (notice I do not say "student") came to us and said, "I would like to improve my writing, and I can come to see you for 50 minutes three times a week for about four months, and I can spend a few hours each week doing what you ask me to do in addition to the hours I am with you."

When I conceptualize my situation in these terms—one teacher, one learner—I ought to be able to think through what my aims and procedures ideally would be. What would I do first? Why would I do that instead of something else? What would be the point in doing it? When the learner had done what I asked, what would I do next? Why? And then what? And why? And *then* what? And why? If I can define for myself my goals and methods as I think of teaching one person to write better, I should be able to regard my conclusions as a model, then use that model in beneficial ways. If I were teaching only one person to do one thing better, I would not have to worry about teaching loads, piles of papers, family obligations, and so on. I would just be trying to teach someone something. I would be able to ask myself simple questions: What do I want us to do, and why do I want us to do it, and how will it help us toward our goal? And presumably I could make clear distinctions, because my thinking would not be muddled by voices from other worlds: How can you correct all those papers? What are the students going to be doing while you spend a week reading what they've written? Don't you think they should be awakened to political and social realities? Why not bring in some literature? It is our Primary Obligation, isn't it? I would be able to say to myself, "I have a single aim, to teach this person to improve his writing, and I know we have a lot of time (together and apart) to get some results.*

Of course my formal training in literature, and my knowledge of what other popular people have done in composition classrooms, might get in the way. I can imagine this conversation:

> I want to learn to improve my writing, and I can be with you 44 hours in the next few months, and I can also work at whatever you wish for 4–6 hours a week.
>
> Great! Now, first of all, buy some paper, and read the first two essays in this book. They're fabulous.
>
> Whoops! You seem to have misunderstood. I don't want to learn to *read* but to *write*.
>
> Yes, I know. But I want you to read these essays so you'll have a subject to write about.
>
> Do you mean I have nothing to write about? You've got me all wrong. I have lived for eighteen years. I have plenty to write about.

* The Ideal Reader of this article would pause here and, in whatever time it took, answer this question: if I were teaching *one person* to improve his writing, and if that were my *sole aim,* how would I go about it?

Sorry, I didn't mean to offend. That's not quite what I meant. I know you've had a lot of valuable experience, and I didn't mean to imply otherwise. What I really wanted to say was that some people have mastered the art of writing, and you might learn something by reading them.

Now *I* have to say I'm sorry. I haven't made my position clear. I've been reading for twelve years. I don't want to learn to read better; I want to learn how to write better.

No need to apologize. I understand what you're saying. I wanted you to look at some models of good writing.

But I've been reading for several years, as I say. I have read a lot of Good Models, and a lot of bad models. And after all that reading, I still consider myself a rather poor writer.

Well, I must say, you *speak* very well. Are you sure you can't write?

Thank you. Not very well.

Perhaps you haven't read any *really* good models. Have you read any Orwell? One of the two essays is by Orwell.

No, I don't think I've read anything by him. But I've read literature in school, and a lot of history, and social studies, and science, and newspapers, and magazines. I've read plenty. I've read *Catch 22* and *Huck Finn* and last year I had to read *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and other classics, by Hardy and Knowles and other great writers. I really have read quite a bit. So I'm not so much interested in reading as in writing. Of course, if you are a reading teacher, I have made a mistake, and can look elsewhere. I really just want to learn to write.

OK. Let's forget about reading, though I really think you'd like this essay by Orwell. Now, you say you want to learn to write. Fine. Say! I have an idea! A couple of weeks ago I saw a film I *know* you'd enjoy. And it has in it all *kinds* of subjects for writing.

Listen, I hate to sound so negative, but I've been seeing movies all my life. I don't need another, no matter how good, to help me improve my writing. You know, that's all I really want to do—improve my writing.

Yes, I know. I just thought this film would, well, would give you . . . .

Now, your students and mine do not usually come to us saying "I want to learn to write," and "I have had lots of experience," and usually it is the student who says, before I can, "Why don't we do something else?", like read an essay or story, or make a collage or film. My students know that in most writing courses, or at least in some they've heard about, the central aim is not to teach writing; it is to stimulate thought, or enrich someone's private or public life, or alert country folk to the dangers of conservatism, or to win people over to literature or the arts generally. Even to warn people that new study called Ecology has shown we are sitting on a time-bomb, this island earth.

The imaginary conversation above depicts a student we hope someday to meet, and a teacher we hope we are not. A more realistic conversation would go like this:

I have to learn to write, or at least pass a writing course, and I have been told I have to work with you, and I can give you a certain number of hours a week. What do I have to do?

Well, let's start by writing. If I am going to teach you to write better, you'll have to write, and you might as well start right in.

> I was afraid you would say that. Couldn't I do something else? Frankly, I hate to write, and always have. I'm no good at it. Besides, I have nothing to write about.

But this "realistic" dialogue is curiously unrealistic. The student who has "nothing to write about" really means what he says, yet we know he is able to play basketball, rebuild an engine, day-dream about glory on the gridiron, win the love of a shy girl, and have fun with his friends. We know he has felt loved and unloved, free and restricted, happy and angry, triumphant and defeated, honored and slighted, understood and misunderstood, treated fairly and cheated. He has felt like a somebody and a nobody, has been attentive and bored, surprised and disappointed, elated and depressed. In other words, he has defined himself as being in hundreds of situations, each of which produced in him a special quality of awareness. When he says he has nothing to write about, he thinks he means he has no experiences of special interest to others, perhaps even to himself. What *I* see him as meaning is quite different: although he has had thousands of experiences that might be of interest to others (and himself in new ways), he has not reflected on them very carefully or complexly, or if he has, he is not confident that if he expressed his reflections they would amount to much. And I know that is probably true, because the art of reflecting on and making something of experience is neither easy nor natural. It is an activity that must be learned, and it is harder than learning to play basketball or rebuild an engine.

My "more realistic" dialogue is realistic on the surface only. Below the surface I find that "I hate to write, I'm no good at it" usually means "I would like to be able to write, but I am afraid of you, and unconfident, and don't think the time spent in trying will pay off." "I have nothing to write about" means "I know other people my age can look on their last few years as a gold mine of experience, because they've actually done interesting things, but the gold in my mine is lead, and I don't know what to do with it except leave it." I, on the other hand, assume that this poor fellow is indeed a gold mine of experience. I also know he probably does not realize this. Most of his experience has been defined, happened and as he reflected on it, rather simply, crudely, and it is more like lead than gold. Further, when he tells me about it in writing, he manages to show me only a small part of the lead! My first job is to get him to let me see, on the pages he writes, a big chunk of the lead; my second job is to teach him how to transmute the lead into gold.

II

I started by proposing that we conceptualize our position by thinking of one student and one aim. Doing so will not help me figure out whether "I love to write" means only "I know all about grammar and want to go on getting A's for doing what I can already do well," and it will not help me determine whether "I don't like to write" means "I can't stand embarrassment

and humiliation, though I wouldn't mind being *able* to write," but it can help me see that the adjustments I make as I move from teaching one person to teaching a group of 25 or 35 are all compromises. I should be able to see that nearly all of the compromises take me away—how far?—from the path I wish I could follow; if I have a clear picture of the *path*, I can evaluate the compromises. Do some of them amount to changing the subject, changing my aims? Are some no more than pleasant digressions? Can any of them be beneficial? (If I were teaching one student, at some time I would want to put him in touch with a wider audience? Hearing many responses to a piece he writes is better than hearing my response only?) Are some of them compromises I would never dream of making with one learner, but almost automatically make when faced by a group? When I examine my actual classroom procedures by using the yardstick of one teacher/one student, how much of what I do appears to be irrelevant to my task of teaching people to improve their writing?

III

If I were going to teach one person to improve his writing, it wouldn't make much difference to me whether his writing was poor or already very good. Essentially my position would be the same. I would want him to write a great deal—for each of our meetings, for example—and I would want him to know, at the end of our four months, as much as he could learn about why using language carefully, artfully, in speech, writing, or thinking (which I take to mean silently talking to ourselves in our heads) is a hundred times more important to him than he realizes.

As for the first aim—wanting him to write for each meeting—perhaps not much needs to be said. We learn to do by doing, in all areas of experience. (A famous joke in educational circles was once this: We learn to do by Deweying.) The only way an unconfident or inexpert writer can gain confidence and competence is by writing enough to see himself improve, and then by learning that what he has written pleases and interests some readers. The only way a student who already writes well can become better is by learning to explore much further the subjects he can now deal with successfully in "Themes." Thus if I were teaching one student, I would ask him to write for each of our meetings, and when we met we would talk about what he had written.

When I think of myself as a college teacher, I say the same thing, almost: my students should write for every class, and when we meet we should talk about what some of them have written. This "some of" is my first compromise. It means looking at duplicated papers, day by day, week by week. It would be easier and perhaps more pleasant to ask my students to write every week or two, and sometimes to talk of Orwell when we met, but if I am trying to devote all of my time to teaching writing, I know from the start

it will not be easy or always pleasant, and I know that Orwell is another subject. Our subject is their writing.

Another word about the compromise I have just spoken of. If I were teaching one student, I would write nothing at all on the pages he wrote. When we met, we would talk, and most of *my* talk would be questions (at first, Can you tell me more here?; later, What do you mean by this?, Why do you say that?, and What connection are you seeing here?, and What does this metaphor express to you?, and What conception lies behind all of your language here?) When I am teaching a group, I write much less than most teachers would on the pages I receive (at first, encouragement; later questions; grades, never.) If I am duplicating papers for every class hour, I know that I don't have to spend a long time "correcting" each paper. I can read the students' papers quickly (and with care), select one or two to be duplicated, and look on the class-hour as the "correction" period. The compromise here puts more of the burden of education on the individual students than they would feel if I were teaching them individually; in the classroom, each student must figure out how the questions and comments directed at someone else's paper are relevant to what he did with the same subject. It takes several weeks for most of my freshmen to understand that only they can make something relevant to their positions as writers, and I don't bother to tell them repeatedly (once or twice is enough). Apparently it is not easy to redefine "English" from "What is this game I am being asked to play?" to "How can I actually learn to improve my performance as a writer?" Our students have somehow come to think of education as obstacles to be surmounted, not activities of mind to be mastered. I was no different. What I wanted, in high school, was an A in French, not genuine fluency. I was not asking myself How can I shape my mind? but How can I appear to have done something Well? Another way to express this is, I did not realize it was *me* who was living my life.

My first aim, then, would be to get one student, or many, to write as often and as much as possible. My second aim, with either one student or a class, would be to put the learner in a position to see that his use of language is far more important to him than he realizes. That is something I cannot get him to see by lecturing.

How important is his use of language? My answer to that question is also my answer to the question, Why should we teach writing?

IV

I teach writing not because I believe my students will need to know how to write better "next year," because I know many of them will not. I teach writing not because my students will someday have to write important letters and reports; *they* don't think they will, and I don't think most of them will either. (That is not to say, however, that the competent, confident writers among them won't find ways to use their ability.) I teach writing not because

I think everyone should know how to write decent English, though I do believe that; it is true, isn't it, that millions of non-writers and poor writers get along well in life?

When I teach composition, I am trying to teach two things: the more artful use of language generally—that is, in thinking, talking, and listening—and the act of composing on paper. I teach the first because I want the student to see that we live at the level of our language, and after explaining that remark briefly I'll talk about the second, writing.

We say we "have" experiences, that things happen to us, that we live through events, and so on, but it seems to me we create those experiences, happenings, events—create what we see as the *shape* of them—by telling ourselves what we are seeing, doing, feeling, thinking. We tell ourselves the story of our moments, our days, our life, and we do so by composing those things in language in our heads, and in language to others. When I have a complex, rich experience, it seems as if the complexity and richness are somehow in the experience itself, but they are not; complexity and richness exist only in symbols. (I don't say "in words," though I think for most of us symbol-manipulation is nearly all word-manipulation.) My freshmen arrive at college thinking the world happens to them; I try to enable them to see that they happen to the world. Emily Dickinson was extraordinary, not because she could do something we cannot, but because she could do it better: she could see a lot in a little. But the "lot" she saw wasn't "there"; she put it there, just as my freshmen create the relations, the distinctions, the connections they think are "in" their exterior and interior worlds.

When my students begin to understand that the lives they think they are "simply living" are their own day-by-day, hour-by-hour creations, and that they do their creating artfully or poorly, and that the moments of experience thus created become "really interesting" or "really dull," they are in a position to redefine their relation to the world of language. They are in a position to recognize that artful use of language, whether in thinking, speaking, listening (which I take to mean re-telling ourselves the story we are hearing), or writing, is the most practical activity anyone can learn. It is through artful use of language that I make my experiences meaningful, make them rich enough to be of genuine interest to me and, perhaps, others.

I teach *writing* partly because I have found it the best way to teach the things I have just been talking about, partly because I want my students to feel the pleasure and illumination that can come from shaping experiences and thoughts carefully on paper. When the symbols are spread out before him on a page, he can examine his act of creating form in a way he can't by trying to watch his mind as it works. Writing is like slow-motion thinking, with the possibility of re-plays. In working over the symbols on the page, arranging and rearranging, seeing how some words lead to others, some statements lead

to new questions, some new questions lead to new insights, the writer finds that he is not only composing words, he is composing his experience. That is the great understanding I work toward in teaching composition. I succeed as a composition teacher only when the student realizes he does indeed live at the level of his language from morning to night, and at the same time realizes that by writing well he can, in a special way, raise the level at which he is, at that very moment, living.

The Thematic Unit and the Composing Process

JOHN H. BUSHMAN, SANDRA JONES, and SANDRA ZERGER
University of Kansas

For many years, teachers have been searching for methods and curriculum designs that produce effective and enjoyable writing programs. A number of approaches have been suggested from time to time: the generative rhetoric of Francis Christensen,[1] the traditional five-paragraph theme,[2] and the recent writing program of Ken Macrorie.[3] While these approaches and many more not mentioned do emphasize writing pedagogy for schools, they fail, it seems to us, to show how these writing programs fit into the total English curriculum; equally important, they fail to show how the curriculum itself plays a part in the composing process. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe one curriculum design—the thematic unit—and to indicate how this curriculum overcomes the deficiencies of those already cited.

Thematic units range from 6 to 9 weeks and may be used in traditional yearly courses of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior English. In such a curriculum, the teacher simply divides the given period of time into various thematic units. These units are also appropriate for more innovative programs which find the teacher involved in English electives, i.e., mini-courses. In this situation, teachers use each thematic unit as a course in itself.

The content of the units is usually linguistically or socially oriented. Units often found among high schools in Kansas and Missouri include such themes as "Loneliness and Alienation," "Love," "Bucking the System," "The Power of Language," "Man's Inhumanity to Man," "Man and his World," "The School Scene." No matter what the theme is, the important point is that all of the language arts—reading, writing, speaking, listening—are taught. In addition, teachers make effective use of film, recordings, improvisation, music, newspapers, and magazines.

The very nature of thematic units provides for process rather than product orientation. Students are encouraged to investigate interesting topics and

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[1] Francis Christensen, *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric: Six Essays for Teachers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

[2] Duane C. Nichols, "The Five-Paragraph Essay: An Attempt to Articulate," in Gary Tate and Edward P. J. Corbett, eds., *Teaching High School Composition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 247–254.

[3] Ken Macrorie, *Writing to Be Read* (New York: Hayden Book Co., 1968), and *Uptaught* (New York: Hayden Book Co., 1970).

become involved in the process of learning; to respond to their peers; to discuss, to sharpen, to defend their own findings; and to accept and weigh the constructive critical response of others. Students are neither stifled in the learning process nor forced to accept ready-made, teacher-centered course content; rather, they are encouraged to question, probe, and seek out responses to their own questions about subject matter that is meaningful to them. That is not to say that the traditional subject matter is disregarded; on the contrary, there is a balance between the traditional and contemporary subject matter in each unit. With this student-centered, experience, involvement, response-oriented approach, students find their activities in the English classroom taking on new meaning, especially in composition.

In the proposed writing program students operate with "freedom and discipline—freedom to follow the directions of one's own movement, and the discipline of considering the response of others to it." [4] Students write within a context that suggests that writing is an individual search for meaning in life and that a student should use his language to explore his world. In sum, the writer experiments with the process of writing.

Before any writing has taken place, however, students engage in pre-writing activities.[5] They are encouraged to discuss their views with others; they "play" with language, making it fresh, alive, and workable; they sharpen their senses and as a result their descriptive powers are more acute. Activities such as these scattered throughout the writing program help the student to better understand his world and his relationship to it.

Initially, students write for short periods of time, but quite frequently. The emphasis is on communication—having something to write and writing it to someone else. As the program continues, more focused writing occurs. The ideas expressed come from the student's experience—often from his childhood. In addition, the discussions that occur in the thematic units also are good sources.

Sharing, criticizing, and revising are other important facets of this program. When the student finishes a particular piece of writing, he shares it with his peers, not as a finished product, but as a piece of writing that is still in process. He receives feedback from his peers as well as from his teacher. In the early stages, this feedback is in the form of positive criticism; the negative criticism occurs later. The next step is usually revision. The writer selects one piece of writing to revise, keeping in mind a few selected suggestions that were given to him by his classmates.

[4] Macrorie, *Uptaught,* p. 167.

[5] The reader may want to consult the following reference for a description of pre-writing and its relationship to the composing process: D. Gordon Rohman, "Pre-Writing: The Stage of Discovery in the Writing Process," *College Composition and Communication,* XVI (May, 1965), 106–112.

The writing is evaluated and criticized, but not graded. Because the writing is rarely considered as a product, grading seems impossible and is certainly not desirable. Students know how they are progressing; they receive much constructive criticism from their peers and the teacher.

As one can see, the emphasis in this writing program is on free writing. The theory is that the thought processes and writing-behavior occur concurrently. Therefore, students are encouraged to express their ideas and feelings in a form that is meaningful to them and at the same time in a way that will warrant attention from others. Emphasis is given to ideas and expression, not to structure, grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. Only after the student has lived with his writing for some time, has received feedback from his peers and teacher, and has attempted the process of revision, is he concerned with the formal editing processes.

Our experience tells us that students in this writing program want to write; they want to share their writing; they find the process most enjoyable; and most important, they write well. Because the thematic unit emphasizes process, involvement, experience, and response; and because the unit includes many diverse activities in the subject matter and pedagogy, the composing process seems to be a natural extension of the thematic unit.

The two units that follow are examples of thematic units found in high school curriculums. Due to lack of space the units have been severely cut; therefore, only summaries, brief descriptions, and abbreviated lists are included for each unit. In keeping with the focus of this paper, the writing rationale and activities have been emphasized.

Revolution and the Establishment

The theme Revolution and the Establishment elicits many discussion topics: the classic youth vs. the older generation, the oppressed vs. the oppressive institutions, progress vs. tradition, and the new morality vs. the old. In this unit students develop ideas from these and similar topics. The six-weeks period is devoted mostly to the study of the power of words and the effectiveness of language. Although there is an emphasis on language and composition, this central theme also allows for the incorporation of the elements of speech, drama, journalism, and literature which are crucial to the total learning process.

For writing to be successful for the students, they must feel comfortable expressing their thoughts. Frequent informal writing that evolves as a response to various stimuli other than the formal writing assignment for a grade, can do much to break down inhibitions and build confidence. Class discussions, panels, and debates are always good for unifying the class and for motivating responses. For example, after a discussion of the meanings of "revolution" and "establishment," students write stream-of-consciousness responses or word-image associations. They share their interpretations and

impressions in an attempt to discover what causes various meanings to be associated with certain words. In other discussion sessions, students study handouts containing popular songs ("American Pie" by Don McClean, "School's Out" by Alice Cooper), passages from famous speeches (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream," Mark Rudd's address to the Columbia students in 1968), news stories and headlines. In this activity the students determine the sources, audience, speakers, and meanings of these selections. As a follow-up activity, students discuss the importance of style in oral and written rhetoric and then write short speeches, news stories and song lyrics using many of the devices that they found in the selections previously read. These are shared with the entire class or small groups. Additional activities include discussing propaganda and its importance in initiating revolutions and maintaining establishments. To do this students choose a side (revolution or establishment) and write positive and negative propaganda in the form of news stories or television ads. This exercise familiarizes students with techniques of persuasion and also shows them ambiguities in their own writing. A discussion on the problems of dialect differences, slang, and connotations may initiate writing from the students' personal experiences. Since most class periods last approximately fifty minutes and since response writing should immediately follow the stimuli, about half the period is used for discussion and the other half for writing. Sharing the writing then follows the next day. During this sharing, criticism of the individual writings is restricted to positive comments. Students care more about making their writing clear and vivid when their peers are included in the audience. The motive for writing quickly becomes the desire for the writing to be understood and enjoyed rather than the completion of a task for a grade.

Different activities requiring individual participation can provide students with an opportunity to discover how their creative process works. Improvisations are entertaining and great for response writing. For example, students bring and share a success symbol indicating what it means to them. Or, to illustrate language devices and varieties, students may improvise situations of verbal interaction between student and student; student and parent at home, in public; student and teacher; draft evader and parents; long-haired boy in jeans and school principal. Another activity involves free writing in response to various media. A topical film is shown dealing with the central theme, e. g., San Francisco State underground Films from 1968; then, students are free to write whatever they wish in response to the film. In the next class period the students discuss and evaluate their writing in groups. The same pattern is followed for response writing to various kinds of music (Jimi Hendrix, Michel Legrand, Joni Mitchell, New York Philharmonic), to topical pictures and prints available in most libraries, to slide shows prepared by students, and to non-topical films ("Snow": Canadian Film Society). The writing in-

volved in all these activities is only restricted by the requirement that it be honest. Students write and share every day. Soon the class becomes a "family" sharing its self-expression and experiences. The writing improves, the inhibitions dissolve, and the atmosphere is free and exhilarating for discussions.

Writing in response to literature needs to move to other levels of writing. Students should be encouraged to use their experiences to compare and evaluate the experiences of others, but at the same time, they should not be prohibited from writing free, emotional responses to this literature. Several sources are used for this central theme: *Strawberry Statement, Hamlet, Les Miserables, The Butterfly Revolution, Lord of the Flies, Catcher in the Rye, Native Son, MS., The Rolling Stone.* All of these have "'revolution vs. establishment" conflicts which students may discover and write about. The new focus now is on evaluating the author's use of effective rhetorical devices and his selection of conflicting circumstances that the students have discovered through their reading and the class discussions. For example, their writing might include a discussion of the use and effectiveness of word choice and audience in articles from *MS.* Too, students can consider what conditions existed that allowed a takeover by kids in a summer camp in *The Butterfly Revolution.* Paralleling Hamlet's family conflicts to their own provides interesting writing responses. The students begin now to discipline their writing style, hopefully retaining the freshness and honesty they achieved in their free writing. These papers are read in class but also may be discussed in conference between students and teacher. Again, it is important to stress the strong areas of the paper.

Initially, the writing activities in this unit are free and unstructured; however, throughout the unit the writing becomes more focused and leads to rather structured exposition as the unit is completed. By the end, students have enjoyed an awakening to the writing experience and at the same time have become aware of themselves as creators.

Black-American Expression

Through the study of several forms of Black American literature, students confront some of the public and private means of expression of Black American writers. Autobiography, biography and the blues exemplify personal expression; poetry and spirituals exemplify public expression. Besides offering students models which provide them with a sense of moral values which seem significant to them, such a unit allows the students to realize that "American" literature includes more than works by White Americans who have melted into the common dominant culture.

In this unit, students should be encouraged to ask questions. The following are but a few that could be explored: Is the melting pot theory valid? Is multi-culturalism a valid alternative? How have black men had to struggle to

attain a degree of respect and achievement; how have they arrived at self-awareness; and how do their experiences relate to all readers? What survival techniques have they been forced to utilize? What impulses lead black men to write autobiographies, blues, poems, spirituals?

The section on personal expression should be more individualized than that on public expression; therefore, the class is divided into groups around each autobiography studied. At the end of the autobiography section, the groups reconvene into the class as a whole.

Like Charlie Brown and Sally, who annually are frustrated with the first essay of the school year, secondary students almost expect a new English class to begin with some "dumb" what-I-did-this-summer theme. In this unit, however, the teacher in a meaningful way can easily capitalize on past writing experiences to introduce the genre of autobiography. After a period of free writings, in which the students write without stopping, organizing, re-planning, or revising in order to get used to writing freely and honestly, focused writings are introduced. These focused writings enable the teacher to start the students on their own "autobiographies." If the students have trouble writing for five or ten minutes on one general topic such as "My Childhood," the teacher leads them with the following kinds of questions: imagine you are six years old. Where are you? What do you see around you? Which objects are permanent to the place, and which are there only today? Are any of these objects moving? Do you hear anything? What kinds of noises? Loud or soft? Can you smell anything? Is the smell comparable to anything else? Which objects can be touched? What do you learn about these objects when you touch them? What mood predominates in this place? From such suggestions, students have written papers such as "Through the Keyhole of My Room" and "Five Minutes from My Sixth Year." In groups students share these writings and discuss their effects on the readers and ask questions such as why anyone would want to write in the first place. Criticisms of the papers range from "I like the comparison of the rocks to hen eggs because it is vivid" to "This paper is memorable, honest, appropriate because. . ."—all qualities of good writing. A collection of such writings is kept, and by the end of the unit, each student has a miniature autobiography. Students are encouraged to return to their files, reword, add, or discard parts from their writings. Opportunities to continue writing in such a manner allow the students to focus on the process of composing.

By writing these autobiographies, students understand what other men say about their need for writing—(they find out about themselves and through writing they preserve history and traditions common to the group to which they belong). Helpful readings include LeRoi Jones, "Myth of Negro Literature," Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," and selections from James Baldwin, *Notes from a Native Son.*

Group 1—*The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* Malcolm X with Alex Haley: biography as personal history.

Listening to records such as *Malcolm X Speaks:* Public Information Communication Association), reading pamphlets (such as *The Assassination of Malcolm X* by George Brietman and Herman Porter) or poems (such as "Harlem" by Langston Hughes) are good pre-writing activities. Written role-playing affects understanding of the book. For students unaccustomed to this type of writing, the teacher makes suggestions so that students imagine the role they select (e.g., [1] the student as a member of the KKK which visited the Little residence—either during the "visit" or later talking to a friend about it, [2] the student as Malcom's English teacher Mr. Ostrowski who teaches Malcolm "his place," or is a close friend of Malcolm who overhears the teacher). Other writing activities include writing "news releases" of Malcolm's death from various viewpoints such as from that of a hardhat, a white liberal, or a black militant, and then writing reactions to these news releases from the public. Or, students group to write campaign speeches for a Black Muslim, an integrationist, and a red-neck who are running for the Senate.

Group 2—*Black Boy,* Richard Wright: autobiography as a means of psychological survival.

One difficult area of this autobiography is the catalogues. Students see them as "arty" rather than something they, too, can experience. A helpful sequence for writing sensory catalogues moves from free association word lists to one-sense catalogues (touch, sight, etc.) to catalogues centered around one mood or incident. This activity leads students to understand the thrill with words Wright describes. Sensory catalogue writing success increases with trips outside the classroom, the use of music or films (e.g., *The Wall:* McGraw-Hill Films), and with group session "analyzing" the thought process of each other's catalogues. (Often great poems result from such catalogues!)

Group 3—*Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro,* Samual Ward: autobiography as slave narrative and as confessional.

In order to experience the effects of de-culturalization and the need for writing to purge oneself, this group uses a simulation game in which it establishes a miniature plantation with students assuming the roles of masters or slaves. The masters do not permit the use of English in the plantation. Rather, a new language is required: a pig-Latin or exclusive use of certain language patterns such as the do-question, or it-statements. After the experience, students write about what happened and how they felt—a purging of their feelings.

Similar writing activities work for blues, spirituals, and poems. Records useful for pre-writing or mood setters during writing in the blues section include Bessie Smith and Ike and Tina Turner. Good blues to read for reac-

tion papers include the Jessie B. Simple tales, "Jazzonia," and "Weary Blues" by Langston Hughes. Students may want to write their own blues, either in prose or poetry. In addition, some students may collect blues from the community.

Spirituals and poems demonstrate how Black American authors establish a sense of community through their writing. Writing experiences in this section of the unit, therefore, would be more communal. The group writes verses to spirituals, perhaps composing the music. Word collages often result in group-composed poems. Also, students write characterizations of the poet or descriptions of the setting of the poem, using only the poem as the source. Because of lack of space, this section cannot be fully described, but the reader may visualize many of the same activities in this section as occurred in the personal expression section.

These two thematic units exemplify the kinds of material and the desired focus that can be meaningful for students in a curriculum which emphasizes process and response orientation, creativity, student freedom, student exploration, involvement, and rich experiences. It would seem to us that English teachers might try thematic unit planning and that this curriculum design might help their students in the composing process.

"Exitus," the Videotape That Went to Boston: "A Momentary Stay Against Confusion"

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Off and on for more than thirty years Robert Frost taught at Amherst, a leading liberal arts college in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts. Printed in *The Amherst Student* of March 25, 1935, is a letter from the poet, a letter written in response to birthday greetings extended by editors of the campus newspaper. The letter reads,

> There is something we can always be doing without reference to how good or how bad the age is. . . . When in doubt there is always form for us to go on with. Anyone who has achieved the least form to be sure of it, is lost to the larger excruciations. I think it must stroke faith the right way. The artist [,] the poet [,] might be expected to be the most aware of such assurance. But it is really everybody's sanity to feel it and live by it. Fortunately, too, no forms are more engrossing [,] gratifying, comforting, staying than those lesser ones we throw off, like vortex rings of smoke, all our individual enterprise and needing nobody's co-operation; a basket, a letter, a garden, a room, an idea, a picture, a poem. For these we haven't to get a team together before we can play.[1]

"A basket, a letter, a garden, a room, an idea, a picture, a poem"—these are solo events, but a videotape, at least a videotape in a freshman composition course, is a team sport complete with huddles, fumbles, and broken plays, but with the possibility of a championship and even a bowl bid at the end of the season.[2]

The "Exitus" team began in the fall semester of 1971 during the second module of an experimental program involving three sections of English 1, all meeting at 2:30 on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Having completed a five-week mod of basic composition, twenty-four freshmen signed up for five weeks of "Multi-media Communications," a short course which probably sounded less strenuous than "Polemics" and less rigorous than "Research and Technical Writing." It only sounded that way.

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[1] *Selected Prose of Robert Frost,* ed. Hyde Cox and Edward Connery Lathem (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), pp. 106–107.

[2] The championship came in February when channel 7, KAYS-TV, telecast "Exitus" during prime evening time. The bowl bid came in the form of an invitation to appear on the program at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Because of financial support from Panhellenic and Junior Panhellenic sponsored by Dean Jean Stouffer and from Associated Women Students sponsored by Sally Ward, Kerry Ahrens of Oakley and Byron Cook of Beloit were able to travel to Boston where they and their instructor showed excerpts from "Exitus."

For one student, though, it didn't even sound that way: "When I first came into this class I thought I was really going to be in trouble. I didn't know what was happening, or anything. And then she comes up with this thing called mods. What are mods? Boy! she about blew my mind." With only fifteen class hours, the class could have "blown it." They didn't. The syllabus called for the creation of a videotape utilizing slides and music, and suggestions for topics were not long in forthcoming: first, Old Fort Hays, once headquarters for men like Custer (too verbal); then, body language (not quite verbal enough); and finally *the* topic, the twentieth-century reenactment of the exodus, the Friday afternoon getaway from campus. The exitus, as this happening came to be called, does not appear to be peculiar to the Fort Hays campus; even in Massachusetts a check of the bus schedules showed that Peter Pan Lines runs two buses from Amherst to Boston every Friday afternoon, nonstop.

During the first class meeting on October 4, an article from a prominent newspaper was presented as a kind of documentary on the freshman condition, that sometimes poignant, perhaps ubiquitous sense of feeling alone, if not lonely. According to the article written from a parent's point of view, ". . . graduation from high school and the departure for college, the first job, or military service is the cutting of the tie. After that the kids are visitors."[3] So, why not do a documentary about this rite of passage. Know why it won't work? We don't get lonesome: we go home every weekend. Such was the advice of a freshman in the hallway before class. Regardless of what textbooks might intimate about colleges and initiation rites, the class agreed that their colleague had a point, a good one. Most Fort Hays students are Kansans, coming mostly from west of Highway 81. For various reasons students leave the campus on Friday afternoon, Friday morning, sometimes even earlier, returning usually late Sunday, although maybe not until Monday. As one freshman paper reads, "The parking lots start to thin out on Thursday afternoon with the consequence of ruffling a few feathers of the Friday teacher." So it is, but *professor* would offer more alliteration than *teacher.* True, there is Biblical precedence for an exodus, something about going out of bondage into a promised land. Is this what college is all about—exiting? Maybe. The emptying of the parking lots, to quote Nancy Richards, ". . . is a happening that happens every weekend." In the words of Byron Cook, ". . . you think of home as, you know, that great place to go back to and you don't think of it as the place you were bored with last summer."

When the second week of class began, three groups (somewhat self-selected) started working on scripts in class, some on documenting the Friday

[3] James R. Dickenson, "Parting Time Had Come; Now She'll Be a Visitor: Taking the Freshman to College," *The National Observer,* September 18, 1971, p. 11.

getaway, some on describing the deserted campus on Saturday, and others on portraying the Sunday return. Still another group began working on a panel discussion, and a final group started planning the section on credits. As one log reads, "We got into our groups after Dr. Vogel had read selections from Robert Benchley about college life." According to Benchley, it was in his freshman year at Harvard that he learned "Charlemagne either died or was born or did something with the Holy Roman Empire in 800" and "There is a double l in the middle of 'parallel.'" It was not until his sophomore year that he learned "Queen Elizabeth was not above suspicion," and in his junior year he generalized that "All women are untrustworthy."[4] Benchley's college education called for a schedule planned with care: "no classes before eleven in the morning or after two-thirty in the afternoon, and nothing on Saturday at all."[5]

After the reading of Benchley, then, the groups met: "Today during class we signed up for various positions. I chose to be script writer. We're supposed to write the script as if we had all the pictures. That's going to be hard because our group hasn't taken any pictures yet." It will be even harder because the photography lab takes at least one week to develop a roll of film—and this mod ends in three and a half weeks.

On Wednesday a handout announced a tentative taping schedule. Production was supposed to begin on Monday of the third week. Meanwhile, a writing assignment seemed in order: expound on the exitus in an expository or argumentative paper, and consider just what the exitus is; also consider what effect the exitus might be said to have on the campus community, family relationships, and scholarship. Several of the students chose to interview around campus. Questioned by one class member, a coed reputedly replied to a guery about the effect of the weekly migration on scholarship, "I don't have a scholarship, so I really don't know." Another said, ". . . my dad pays for my schooling, so whats it matter to me. Boy, that's a dumb question."

On Friday the students worked on their own because their instructor exited to Lawrence for the annual conference on composition and literature at the University of Kansas. Jim McHenry, assisted by Deb Keegan, created "a triangle job to spin for intro," a three-sided mobile which, when suspended and twirled, revealed the title on one side and artistic designs on the other sides. Unfortunately, Jim's cast bronze sculpture of Icarus was not finished in time for production, but "Spirit in Flight" did introduce the videotape produced in the spring multi-media mod. The logs reveal problems: "Tried to get in contact with photographers but couldn't locate them today. Must have

[4] "What College Did to Me," *Reading, Writing, and Rhetoric,* ed. J. Burl Hogins and Robert E. Yarber (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1967), pp. 348–349.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 347.

gotten our schedule mixed up." "No class. Tried to find Nancy but couldn't." "I was in the hospital."

With taping postponed because of delays, the third week began as an instructor in television, William Hancock, spoke to Section N of English 1 in McCartney 218, our classroom equipped with two television monitors. The gist of his remarks is apparent from the logs: "He explained more of what we had to do. Very interesting man." "He collected the scripts and made several remarks about them." "He said that many of the pictures the groups asked for were almost impossible to get."

Wednesday, October 20, marked the very last day to take pictures; credit shots were taken of the entire class as the students assembled outside McCartney Hall in front of and on top of an aging gray "Forty and Eight" boxcar decorated with fading diagonal stripes of blue, white, and red. Later in the week it was noted that in an obscure corner on one end of this campus landmark, part of the French Merci Train, two words are stenciled in black: KEEP OFF. No one noticed the sign, but someone noticed the photographer: "Took one of the box car. . . . The photographer seemed to be a real nice guy."

To continue, "For the conclusion we decided to use Deb Keegans car 'Flash' [1947 Chevrolet] and have a series of visuals with a group of kids loading her car and driving off into the sunset." Shortly before sundown photographer Bob Leiter arrived, but before the carload of freshmen could head west into the sunset,[6] the campus police happened by in their blue cruiser and suggested driving east on the pavement rather than west onto the levee. No shots were taken of "Flash" disappearing into the sinking sun, but the evening's work paid off anyway: "Around 6:15 a few of us . . . met by Malloy Hall and had some pictures taken of our suitcases and a '46 maroon chevy. Should be super neat pictures. The 46 chevy should really do it. Can't wait to see them. Should get the affect of the film from these slides."

Taping was further delayed on Friday because all the visuals were not yet developed and mounted. It sounded like Friday: "Wasn't in class because I had to go to HHS coronation [some ceremony at Hays High School]." "Couldn't be in class, but taped music for Sunday group. Sounds great!" "Good old Friday. Yea! Went to class today."

Monday of the fourth week brought even more delays: "The schedual said we were to tape our portion of video tape but the first section had not been completed." Nevertheless, some work could be done: "Started numbering pictures. . . . Figured out how to fade Fridays music into Saturdays." (It appears that the -'s inflection is being subsumed within the -s inflection, at least in freshman prose.) Before the video and audio could be put together

[6] Kerry Ahrens, Byron Cook, Eileen Dreiling, Marcia Eilert, James Ferguson, Deb Keegan, and Kirby Ricke. Charlie Rupp was elsewhere.

on videotape, all the audio—songs, voices, sound effects—had to be recorded on a master audio tape: "Got to TV studio at 1:30. The audio tape wasn't done so Bob Leiter and I worked on it. We added some extra little goodies like conversations over music. . . . We worked on tape until 5:45." Other goodies on the tape include the sound of a 707 jet taking off, recorded over "Born To Be Wild" (for the Friday section), and this poem, written by a friend of Peggy Schroder's (for the Saturday section):

> Go to college and become a whole person.
> Join the right organizations and you will never be lonely.
> Well here I am—and why am I all alone?

(Maybe the freshman condition exists after all?)

On Wednesday of the next-to-last week most of the class met in McCartney 218 to watch the monitors as a panel discussion by four students and three faculty members was being taped in the television studio in Malloy Hall. The student panelists appeared to be somewhat intimidated by the presence of three very fluent faculty members (a professor of psychology, the assistant dean of women, and the director of housing). Hence it was decided later the day to try again, this time on Friday with a panel exclusively of students: Kerry Ahrens, Byron Cook, Nancy Richards, and Ed Chaplin (the Greek, a Teke). Back in the classroom, "Deb handed out assignments for the rest of the week. . . . We also got to view the panel on the T.V. Some of it wasn't to good. I think the students should have said more. . . . I can't wait to see the finished tape project." Even though it meant more delays, a revision was obviously in order: "Left [class] because I had a doctors appointment. Supposed to have watched actual taping of panal. Heard it wasn't very good. That the panal members didn't get to say all they wanted and it was cut short." *Panal?* Banal.

With the scrapping of the student-faculty panel on Wednesday, actual production of "Exitus" did not begin until later in the same day when the crew put together the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday sections, approximately twenty minutes of viewing time or about two-thirds of the tape. In 1971 the longest night of the year seemed to come in October instead of December: "6:30 p.m. Got to studio to work on panel but it was in use so we synchronized slides until 7:30 when we started setting up for the production." The tape began to the strains of the theme from the movie "Exodus," and Jim and Deb's mobile provided the visual: Ed ". . . had to spin this box like deal hanging down on a piece of string. I was supposed to spin it straight but it was impossible." Moreover, the slide chain, a mechanical gismo in the control room, insisted on periodically dropping slides out before projecting them for a camera to pick up, thereby altering the effects planned for certain sequences. An eyewitness noted, "Started taping at about 9:30 and we were done except for the conclusion and credits by 10:45." It seemed later; it also

seemed good to be that far: "Friday we will tape a new panel and Monday we will see the 'fruit of our efforts.'" Maybe a few lemons but hardly any sour grapes.

With Friday of the fourth week came the last day to write in logs: "As an assignment for today we are suppose to enter topics for writing assignments related to the videotape. We will write on these topics Wednesday." So someone suggested, ". . . we should be able to write whatever we want. But if it has to be something definite I would like to write a communicating composition where you just write down what your thinking and it doesn't have to relate to any other part of your composition." Just to the consciousness streaming by? This afternoon the spontaneous though slightly rehearsed panel went very well, so well that the first take took. Sample dialogue:

> Kerry: Well, how does this exitus affect the campus community?
> Ed: It makes it hard on guys to get dates.
> Nancy: Well, they could always resort to the Hays girls. . . .

A tense, expectant class watched "Exitus" on the last day of the mod, November 5. A Friday, attendance was not perfect; in fact, on Thursday a telephone message appeared on my desk: "Karry Harens [sic] called and can't be in your class tomorrow. She has to move cattle." Of course—"The parking lots start to thin out on Thursday afternoon"—consequently ruffling the feathers of the Friday professor. It should be noted, though, that in spite of its being Friday, two students unexpectedly brought guests along to class.

To summarize, this experiment in a multi-media composition mod confirms the assumption that creating a videotape can be an exciting way to learn the process of composition and all that pertains to it, especially invention, organization, and revision. It also confirms another assumption, namely that creating a videotape can mean creating a contemporary art form, "a communicating composition," to borrow the words of Peggy Schroder. Certainly a videotape does not have to be a taped lecture; in the case of a creative tape, a lecture has little, if any, justification. Even a panel needs to be justified. In too many educational circles, though, taping a lecture and taping a panel are regarded as the only possibilities for using instructional television. Finally, the mod also confirms the fact that although a tape can be produced in five weeks, more sane policy might allow about half a semester and possibly a whole semester for such a project.

According to the preface of one of the textbooks used in the experimental English program at Fort Hays,

> . . . students must be allowed and encouraged to discuss what *they* value, and their instructors must learn about it. In other words it may be possible to make the student aware of his own experience, to heighten that awareness by asking him to communicate it orally or in writing, and to extend his experi-

ence. What is relevant to both teacher and student, and should be, is what there is of value and taste that our own time is producing.[7]

The students of English 1 (Section N, Mod 2) produced something of value and taste in our own time—"Exitus."

After watching "Exitus," a freshman from another mod wrote, "It was interesting because there were places and people in it the student knows; entertaining because it provided a change; and educational because it dealt with a current issue in the life of a college student." Like literature, the videotape can apparently delight and instruct. Also like literature, the tape has a lasting quality: "Putting it together was hard, but I think the experimental mod has something permanent to leave in its place. . . ." The two dozen freshmen who created "Exitus" know what creating a contemporary art form is all about. There follows a potpourri of their comments, excerpted from final evaluation papers; taken together, the remarks show an awareness of current issues and controversies in English education, although these matters were seldom, if ever, the subject of classroom discussion.

1. The Friday music is especially good! It tells of the story of leaving by the music being played. It is a fast moving group of songs that makes a person feel like he wants to hurry up and get out of college.

2. The Sunday return was massive, like the Friday departure but without the hurriedness. It was a slower, a more unwilling return.

3. I think the tape created a false overtone of being lonely. . . . I feel that the weekend is not half as bad as it was made to look.

4. . . . it does tell a true story of Fort Hays State. There were ideas in the tape that might be considered a little far out. Like the picture of the girl in the car trunk surrounded by suitcases is not all that realistic but it does relay a message to the audience.

5. While watching it, in class, time and again I would say to myself; gee,! I thought of that, or I helped for that part.

6. It was a job well done. Not by all, but by most of the students involved.

7. What did I learn in this class? A lot more than I would learn by reading how to make a videotape. I learned also that English Comp. does not have to be a boring class that everyone hates to go to.

8. I really was surprised how interesting a English class can be! But don't think this a plug for [a] higher grade in this course, although it would be nice.

[7] *The Insistent Present,* ed. John Mahoney and John Schmittroth (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1970), p. x.

9. I feel the tape was a great project, but was out-of-place in an English class.

10. Communication is a hang-up I have. I am one that is throughly convinced that English should be removed from the drab grammar sessions and move into the field of communication. . . . I feel like the emphasis should be placed on teaching him how to communicate with the rest of his race, instead of trying to see how many hours of class he can sleep through. I'm convinced that a videotape project is a broadening and an expansion in the right direction.

11. The process of creating a videotape program is comparable to the process of having a baby. It's a lot of work, pain, and anxiety, but when it's all over you're very happy and proud.

12. Thus, we come to the end of one of the most fantastic and fun courses I've ever taken. I think that the tape has helped to build a feeling of fellowship or a lasting bond of friendship between members of the class that you usually don't have in a college course.

If the class was a fun class (and it was), Cyndi Schulte has suggested the reason why: "Perhaps the most fun of the class was the actual creating and producing of the tape." "Exitus" came about through the cooperation of people inside and outside the department of English, originally through the recommendations of a workshop directed by Richard Whittington and particularly through the efforts of the staff in the television studio, especially Jack Heather, Bill Hancock, Ralph Baxter, and Bob Leiter. In the words of one of the students, "This type of project rejuvenates the spirit and enthusiasm we should have towards school." In the words of a poet, it leads to ". . . a momentary stay against confusion."[8]

At the Conference on College Composition and Communication our presentation of selections from "Exitus" was simply a continuation of the course in a way; as one student said of the tape, it ". . . is really a miracle." Although a rose may be a rose, a videotape machine is not a videotape machine: the Fort Hays equipment, consisting of Diamond Power one-inch helical-scan machines, is not compatible with the half-inch equipment found in most educational institutions as, to draw a parallel, 16 millimeter movie equipment is not compatible with 8 millimeter equipment. Since Diamond Power Electronics had no record of their machines being placed north of New York City, the firm volunteered to dub our tape onto a half-inch one so that "Exitus" could be shown on the equipment available in Boston. Time, like the mod, was short. The three of us flew east without "Exitus," and things looked ominous when the convention hotel assigned me a room on the

[8] "The Figure a Poem Makes," *Selected Prose of Robert Frost,* p. 18.

thirteenth floor, but the videotape arrived by air from Ohio on Friday morning, March 24, just in time for our afternoon program.

The reaction of the CCCC audience could probably best be summed up in one word—envy. That is, the onlookers were envious a freshman class, or any college class for that matter, could have access to the sophisticated hardware available to Fort Hays students. Participants in Workshop 35 (Demonstration on Media and Composition), including representatives from Salem State College and Purdue University, talked about films, slides, and television commercials, but the only videotape shown at the workshop came from Fort Hays State. True, one teacher in the audience questioned the propriety of using videotape in an English composition class, but the two Fort Hays freshmen made it clear, if not crystally so, that his was a minority view.

A highlight of the trip came the next day: Mary Carswell Reed (who along with her husband, Dr. James Reed—both Fort Hays State alums—hosted Kerry and Byron two evenings at their home in Wayland, Massachusetts) drove us north of Boston into New Hampshire through Derry where we crossed West-Running Brook, stopped at the Robert Frost Farm, walked down into the snowy woods and saw the stone wall, which looks well mended.

FROM THE STATE SPECIALIST'S DESK

LOIS CAFFYN

Since the last issue of *Kansas English,* the State Board of Education has made two official decisions which are of special interest to language arts teachers. A report on them seems appropriate at this time because they will affect these teachers and their work directly and almost immediately.

First, the state board passed into regulation the following revised requirements for the certification of language arts teachers as recommended by the Professional Teaching Standards Advisory Board, to be effective January 1, 1973:

A. English: Composition, Literature, Language

Thirty-six semester hours with twenty-four semester hours to be in basic English courses of composition, literature and study of the English language. Included must be one course in advanced composition and one of the following: modern grammar, linguistics, or the history of the English language. Twelve semester hours shall include one course in speech; the remaining hours may be in additional courses in composition, literature and study of the English language and/or in the related fields of speech and theatre arts, journalism, and the teaching of reading.

B. Journalism (For courses offered for credit)

Twelve semester hours in such courses as the following: basic journalism, photography, survey of mass communications, reporting, and school publications.

C. Speech and Theatre Arts

Fifteen semester hours in such courses as the following: public speaking, theatre, discussion and debate, oral interpretation, and voice diction.

Please note that this revised statement becomes effective January 1, 1973.

These new requirements represent a compromise on semester hours requested for speech/drama and journalism, but at least these valuable related areas have been moved off the long-standing six-hour level. The effects of the application of these higher requirements remain to be seen.

Most experienced teachers and those who have just been graduated from a college or university are already qualified under the new regulation. Probably each of you should check your own transcript to be sure you will not be caught off guard.

Second, on July 6, 1972, the State Board of Education adopted goals, subgoals, and objectives for education in the State of Kansas. The process that culminated in the adoption began in 1969 with Project SEEK, which undertook to identify the educational needs, especially those labeled the "Ten Critical Needs," of Kansas. Since then the new Planning, Research, and Evaluation Section of the State Department of Education has carried the responsibility for developing goals into a format that could be submitted to the state board for approval.

The goals contain the influences of many different groups and individuals, mostly laymen in the sense that they were not subject area specialists and perhaps not educators.

Reprinted here are the four general "Goals," with, for the sake of brevity, only the subdivisions that apply directly to the language arts field. Other subdivisions that have to do with such topics as changing society, self-image, career preparation, and values are obviously related, but less directly.

GOAL I: The Kansas educational programs shall provide for all people in Kansas continuous and successful acquisition of skills, knowledge, and attitudes which are appropriate and conducive to individual personal growth and development necessary for a productive and satisfying life in a changing society.

I.A.2. BASIC SKILLS—COMMUNICATION

SUB-GOAL—Students should demonstrate, appropriate to their educational level and personal objectives, communication skills which include:

Writing—

1) *an ability to write, displaying preferred grammar usage, spelling, and syntax;*
2) *an ability to write, demonstrating legible cursive writing;*
3) *an ability to write clearly and effectively for social, scholastic, and occupational communication and for creative expression.*

Listening—

1) *an ability to react and respond to thoughts of others, to ask questions, to listen attentively, to follow directions, and to gain information by listening;*
2) *an ability to comprehend and make inferences from what they have heard;*
3) *an ability to listen critically to what they have heard.*

Speaking—

1) *an ability to participate in discussion;*
2) *an ability to logically organize thoughts, information, ideas, and feelings;*
3) *an ability to speak, demonstrating:*
    a) *preferred grammar usage and syntax,*
    b) *clear enunciation,*
    c) *vocabulary and ideas appropriate for educational level*

Reading—

1) *an ability to recognize words, demonstrating a knowledge of phonics and word structure;*
2) *an ability to read aloud with preferred pronunciation and intonation;*
3) *an ability to read with comprehension, demonstrating recognition of word meanings, understanding of interrelationship of ideas, and remembering information;*
4) *an ability to interpret what they have read by making inferences and by demonstrating knowledge of literary devices;*
5) *an ability to display appreciation and enjoyment of reading.*

a. Objective—By 1978 ( ) materials should be developed to assist in teaching students communications skills.

b. Objective—By 1976 ( ) students should have individual programs for development of speaking skills.

c. Objective—By 1977 ( ) all elementary school teachers should be knowledgeable in the diagnosis of reading problems and in prescriptive remedies.

I.K.2. ARTS AND HUMANITIES: CONSTRUCTIVE, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE THINKING

SUB-GOAL—Every student in Kansas schools, under the guidance of well-qualified teachers, should have organized learning experiences in the humanities (defined as a study of the interrelationship of the arts and the humanizing influence of man's struggle to recreate his inner self in some observable art form and in verbal language).

a. Objective—By 1975 ( ) every teacher of the humanities or related arts should complete some study of the interrelationship of the arts and humanities, as defined above, either through classwork at an institution of higher learning or through in-service education experience.

b. Objective—By 1975 ( ) at least one college or university in the state should provide a graduate level concentration or competency program for experienced teachers who wish to teach a unified course in the humanities and related arts.

c. Objective—By 1974 ( ) every school should provide students at all levels learning experiences with oral and written language as a unique human vehicle for imagination, intercultural communication, and formulation of ideas.

I.K.3. ARTS AND HUMANITIES: CONSTRUCTIVE, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE THINKING

SUB-GOAL—Every student in Kansas—elementary, secondary, and higher education—should have planned learning experiences in developing facility in arranging ideas, detecting fallacies and discrepancies, and relating ideas so as to arrive at defensible individual conclusions and solutions.

a. Objective—By 1976 ( ) every teacher at all levels of elementary, junior high, and senior high school should provide some class or nonclass experience in the logic of decision-making regarding life issues which touch the student's environment.

b. Objective—By 1976 ( ) every teacher at all levels of elementary, junior high, and senior high school should provide some learning experiences that foster creative thinking.

GOAL II: The Kansas educational system, recognizing disparity of educational opportunity afforded various segments of the population, shall provide programs specific to the needs of all groups.

GOAL III: The Kansas educational system shall provide for the accomplishment of educational goals through the preparation and continued improvement of professional and paraprofessional personnel and utilization of the most effective educational methods and technologies.

GOAL IV: The Kansas educational system shall cooperatively develop within each school district, institution, and related agency those educational management capabilities needed to provide meaningful information and effective administration of all educational programs in Kansas.

Your administrator has a copy of the complete text of the state goals which he would probably be glad to share with you, if you have not already read it.

It seems apparent from the fact that "Basic Skills—Communication" is the only category given for the language arts field that the general public, especially management, perceives "English" as a tool subject, in which one uses "good grammar" or "bad grammar," "correct" or "incorrect" grammar. Sub-Goals I.K.2, especially Objective c, and I.K.3, which pertain to "Arts and Humanities: Constructive, Critical, and Creative Thinking," provide the only direct inclusion of literature and the intangibles of language as a humanizing influence. Perhaps it behooves language arts teachers to look again at the subject they teach in relation to the society which employs them and make some adjustments in an effort to reconcile what the layman perceives with what the language arts teacher perceives.

As many of you are beginning to write long-range goals and more immediate objectives, in terms of observable student behavior, for your school or department, you might well keep these state goals at hand so that yours will in some way lead toward the achievement of them, plus others that you may feel are the unique and vital mission of the language arts field.

Composing Processes: A Book Review

ELDON ZOLLARS
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The teaching of writing along with the organization of a well-organized coordinated program of writing in the secondary schools is always a point of discussion and argument among English teachers—at least, in the school system in which I am employed. I have just finished reading a research report that I am sure every secondary teacher of composition would find both beneficial and perhaps disturbing. It is Janet Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (Number 13 in a series of research reports sponsored by the NCTE Committee on Research). Because this report is concerned primarily with the composing processes of student writers, some of the general findings and implications for teaching writing can be used in the formulation of an effective writing program in the public schools. Therefore, I will give a brief summary of a few of the chapters of the report in hopes that the readers of this article will find enough interest in it to read Emig's report for themselves.

Using her adaption of the case-study method, Emig draws her data from eight average to above-average high school seniors who volunteered to participate in the study: five girls and three boys. Each student met four times with the investigator: all sessions were recorded on tape. At these sessions, each student was asked to compose aloud while writing; react to a pre-arranged stimulus and to bring with him whatever outlining and planning he did in the period between sessions; recall as completely as possible all the writing he had ever done, both inside and outside school; and give an evaluation of the teaching of writing he had experienced in school.

The information drawn from her data indicates that a contradiction exists between what professional writers actually do and what textbooks state students should do during the writing process. She also points out that the type of writing, extensive writing (school-sponsored) and reflexive writing (self-sponsored), has a great influence upon the attention a student pays to planning, outlining, and revision.

Of most concern to the teacher of composition, I would think, are the sections dealing with "General Findings" and "Implication for Teaching." Emig states that twelfth graders, at least the subjects used in her study, engage in two modes of composing, reflexive and extensive. Reflexive writing has a longer prewriting period and often occurs as poetry. The self (or perhaps a faithful friend) is the primary audience. Extensive writing occurs mainly as prose. The student's attitude toward this type of writing is aloof and his

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writing is often reportorial. Teachers are the main audience for extensive writing.

Some implications for teaching that Emig draws from this study could be somewhat disruptive for some teachers. She attacks the *five-paragraph theme* asking why this type of theme is so important in the composition curriculum. "The reason teachers often give is that this essentially redundant form, devoid, or duplicating, of content in at least two of its five parts, exists outside their classroom, and in very high places—notably, freshman English classes, 'business': and in the 'best practices' of the 'best writers'—that. . . this theme somehow fulfills requirements somewhere in the real world." (p. 97). Emig further states that ". . . many teachers of composition, at least below the college level, themselves do not write. They have no recent, direct experience of a process they purport to present to others" (98). Of course, she points out what perhaps might be one reason for this: ". . . there are in the United States very few teacher-training institutions which have intensive and frequent composing as an organic part of the curriculum for young and for experienced teachers of English" (98). A more crucial point that Emig draws forth is the fact that in the teaching of writing, teachers oversimplify the process of writing and that they are concerned with a student product they can criticize rather than a product they can help a student develop and sustain.

Based upon Emig's findings, I feel that the planners of in-service training for teachers could perhaps set up a more meaningful in-service program. Give opportunities for teacher involvement instead of listening to a lecturer recite how writing should be taught. Set up a time in which teachers bring their original writings (reflexive writing) to share with other teachers: set up a time in which teachers react to a given stimulus (extensive writing), and in so doing, teachers would actually plan (outline), write, and revise. If this is the writing process to be taught to students, teachers, then, should go through the same process. Of more importance, a session could be held in which teachers could try to develop activities and organizational procedures that would help promote student reflexive writing (self-sponsored) in addition to the already present extensive writing (school-sponsored). Perhaps some form of a market for student writing, other than teacher market, could be established for the purpose of providing both an incentive for the student to write and for the evaluation of that writing.

Of course, so brief a summary of Emig's *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* as I have presented does not do justice to her report. I do feel that some of the implications of her report are significant and that secondary teachers of composition as well as planners of in-service training could profit from reading her report. Some of the findings such as the students' attitude toward writing and especially toward outlining and revision have been known for some time, however. Teachers are still trying to find methods in

which to solve these problems. Finally, English teachers should not be threatened by this report but rather take the report as it was intended: what happens to the student's *self* as a result of his involvement in our various writing programs set up by educators in our secondary public schools.

Here We Go Again

STEVEN HIND
Hutchinson Community Junior College

> "So with yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air." 1 Corin. 14:9

Another school year, the time that frequently seems so out of joint, turns one to evaluation and justification of his practices as "English teacher," what students too often see as that plague upon the house of learning, that mind of inky black scribbling "wild and whirling words" filled with enigmatic allusions on their papers. Perhaps it is this criticism that leads the English teacher to reflecting overmuch; perhaps it is the company he keeps. Whatever the reason, we are compelled to re-evaluate our justification for teaching composition as we do. At times the justification is inadequate in the face of scathing criticism and the resulting uncertainty has had and is having some disastrous effects upon the state of the discipline in many instances. No more difficult discipline exists within the scope of traditional school activity than the act of composing on paper and it is, therefore, understandable that teachers are dismayed in teaching it and students frustrated in learning it. But the habit must be refined if one is to become "educated" and if agony accompanies the birth of discipline and precision in expression, the learner must simply take account of a reality of life; not only did no one ever promise you a rose garden, rose gardens don't grow wild.

Ben Franklin, who certainly had personal experience on his side, wrote a satire about the "convenience of being reasonable" in which he recounts a tale showing the human ability to rationalize, to *make* reasonable that which he wishes to do. So teachers from fear and frustration and, I dare say, too frequently from incompetence find the business of advising and cajoling and at times coercing students to discipline their thinking to be a most inconvenient activity. It relieves so many parties from so much agony and conflict if students can just feel deeply and teachers absorb sympathetically after which both can exclaim something like, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!" It is so much more difficult to write deliberately and read critically after which both writer and reader resolve that they have come far and they will go farther yet though the journey is not easy. If this sounds didactic and a bit old-fashioned (stuffy), that's because it is.

I am weary with those professional and student forces that insidiously encourage me to be sibling and/or parent to my students; I haven't the omni-

Steven Hind served four years on the staff at Topeka High School before moving to his present position at Hutchinson Community Junior College. He is in his third year there now.

potence nor the omniscience to be either. I do have a certain intellectual inheritance which I have cultivated to the best of my ability and I have given considerable thought to the methods most useful for imparting that heritage to others. My chief function is to enhance the mental development of my students; if I can't aid significantly in this capacity, I probably can't accomplish anything of real worth in the school environment. The foundations of this assertion are so ancient that they should need no explanation, yet occasion so informs against us that I feel compelled to point out the obvious.

The learned are superior to the ignorant; the self-disciplined are a greater asset to themselves and their respective cultures than are the overindulgent. Honesty is no virtue if it does not accommodate a drive toward a civilized ideal. These discriminating principles are the basis for the process called education; one must have a notion that one direction is superior to a number of others. This agreement within reasonable limits is the glue that holds men in the cooperative configurations called cultures. Likewise, composition is a striving toward an ideal, the perfect transfer of any idea from one mind to another beyond the limits of one's lifetime. Certain adjustments in that ideal will need to be made to suit the individual's flair, but the ideal must be well explored and understood before intelligent adjustments can be made. The expository writer, like the tennis player, may develop a personal style, but he must agree with his fellows on the shape of the court and the rules of the game. Unlike the rules of tennis, the rules of writing are not so arbitrary as one would hope. Developing individual style in tennis or writing is such a private matter that advice is as apt to be a nuisance as a help.

"But," say young and insistent voices in the crowd of our time, "who are you to prescribe an ideal? Who are you to dictate my individual direction? I am Me and you can't prescribe Me to me."

"That is precisely my point," I reply. "I do not know what you will make of you; however, I have a notion that you are standing upon the shoulders of your cultural predecessors; and therefore, since your autonomy is an illusion, you should see as clearly as possible that upon which you are standing. What you do beyond that point lies within the dictates of your own genius" (the word "genius" has its roots in a notion of a gift from birth).

I am not, as a bright young student recently accused me, attempting to destroy the "young Hemingway" in students. I do not presume to do what innumerable rejection slips from prestigious publishers could not. I am attempting to gauge with a reasonable degree of accuracy both that student's perception of Hemingway's art and his ability to express that perception in relation to what I know of disciplined and logical writing as conceived and refined in our tradition. Like Paul, who wished to build upon the vision of the Christ, I am skeptical of the wisdom of neophyte mysticism and wish to encourage relatively orthodox expression so that men will have common

ground for communication. I also question my own ability to evaluate such youthful stirrings. Admittedly there is a fine distinction here, even a paradox: strive to become but don't presume to be; imitate the past in striving to become the future. Like the Greeks I understand man's predicament; I do not mistake paradox for hypocrisy. Also, I do not expect to be quite as shocked by the future as Mr. Toffler does.

An important aspect of my harangue lies in the stance it allows me in evaluating student work. "Grading" in all its forms, both letter symbols and written remarks, must not be construed as an attempt to evaluate personality. It is an attempt to compare student work to the standards of the culture's past as perceived by another more experienced student, generally called "'teacher." Students must understand that, at least ideally, grading is a scale for comparison and not the goal of the writing process. They must see that what the teacher is saying with grades is, "In relation to my knowledge of the standards of clear communication, I rank your effort in this situation at this time as 'G'. Through the study of examples from the past, examples of your own work, and examples composed by your fellow students, let us now do all we can to enhance your facility with ideas." Of course, the variable here is the student's age, but this affects the level of sophistication, not the clarity of communication.

But where in all of this is love and compassion? Where is a concern for the human being? The highest honor a teacher can pay his students is to consider them worthy of being the most knowledgeable, articulate, and self-controlled human beings the world has ever produced. What an unforgivable injury to delude students into accepting an endless wandering through the labyrinth of their own time and place accompanied by encouraging smiles as a substitute for cultural acumen and intellectual growth accompanied by honest attempts to evaluate their progress. Passion's slave leaves latent those abilities which when developed indeed make him the paragon of animals. Compassion must not be confused with commiseration which is fine for funerals, but schools are not cemeteries. Hamlet may find his will puzzled and his heart sick, and we may wish to weep with him, but the world won't wait; he must act. And Paul may seem overly didactic to free souls, but he played an important role in creating a structure that did much to keep civilization alive during some very dark days. Our students will be called upon for much. I do not want to find myself to be a Pangloss whose student discovers the truth about paradise and tells his teacher to shut his foolish mouth and put his hand to the spade.

Nero's Sin in Eng. Comp. I

"Consider well man's sense of loss,
The faith in God and Christ and Adam;
No more the upright righteous Boss,
No more for us a gentle Madam."

The idle pencil's tic-tac-toes
Set to the droning background lecture
Ward off the plague-some student doze,
Ward off the teacher's harsh conjecture.

Who wants to waste the flame of youth
In guessing what Teiresias knows?
When one assumes there is no truth,
The task becomes an artful pose.

But just suppose one starts supposing
How things have changed since Nero's day;
One might detect by painful nosing
A taint of smoke above the play.

Steven Hind

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 2–3	Midwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, Oak Brook, Illinois
March 2–3	Southwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, Tulsa, Oklahoma
March 16–18	NCTE Regional Conference, Colorado Springs, Colorado
March 23	KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH, Salina
March 29–31	Conference on English Education, Baltimore, Maryland
April 5–7	Conference on College Composition and Communication, New Orleans, Louisiana
April 6–8	National Conference on the Language Arts in the Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois
April 13–17	Spring Institute: Humanities in the Schools, K-12, Sante Fe, New Mexico
April 27–29	Secondary Section English Curriculum Conference, Cincinnati, Ohio
November 19–21	NCTE Preconvention Conferences and Study Groups, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
November 22–24	NCTE Annual Convention, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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